



Doug Murphy/AFN

Longtime Ahwatukee Foothills resident Greta Rogers says the South Mountain Loop 202 proposal is being promoted using misinformation. She made her point during Monday's Village Planning Committee meeting.

Village nixes freeway on Pecos

By Doug Murphy
Staff Writer

It's only an advisory vote, but on Monday members of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee made it perfectly clear what they think of a freeway on Pecos Road.

"I can see no redeeming value – we're against this freeway," said Max Masel, a member of the planning committee for over a decade.

He introduced a motion to support the no-build option for the South Mountain Loop 202 on Pecos Road that was unanimously approved.

The village planning committee is the closest thing Ahwatukee Foothills has to a town council, but Masel understood that the advisory vote would have a limited impact on the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Maricopa Association of Governments that will eventually decide the fate of the \$2 billion project.

The freeway was first conceived in the early 1980s and approved by voters in 1988 to connect Interstate

10 in Ahwatukee Foothills, go through a corner of South Mountain Park and reconnect with I-10 near 55th Avenue.

Because of a lack of money, the freeway sat on hold for much of the past 15 years.

Now ADOT is taking a new look at the route to update it to accommodate changes over the past two decades.

A recommendation on a route for the west side of the project was scheduled for the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team meeting held last night. The team had narrowed it down to three options for connecting the Loop 202 to I-10, at 55th Avenue, 71st Avenue and at the Loop 101/I-10 interchange.

But for the eastern portion of the proposed freeway, Pecos is the only viable route.

"Unfortunately, in Ahwatukee, our options are limited," said Matt Burdick, a spokesman for ADOT.

But for Melanie Pai, who organized a group opposing the freeway, the proximity of truck traffic next to schools is a dangerous mix. She said that unanswered

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questions about air pollution and children's health should be enough to stop the freeway.

"We need to protect our kids. That should be as much a priority as getting to the west side 10 minutes faster," she told the planning committee meeting before the vote.

Burdick said that ADOT is also working with the Gila River Indian Community to discuss possible routes on tribal land, south of Pecos Road.

But that too could be a double-edged sword. If a freeway route is selected on Indian land, it would move it from local schools and homes but there would be no input from Phoenix residents on the freeway design, and the freeway could be just yards south of

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Pecos Road.

ADOT plans to use the summer to make what it hopes are improvements to the public involvement process so that when the advisory team meets again in the fall to look at the Ahwatukee Foothills portion of the freeway there is a better exchange of information than in the past.

Laurel Arndt, a member of the village planning committee and the advisory team was not hopeful, saying that decisions were being made in the west side of the project with "pathetic" design and air quality information.

"If we didn't have enough information on the west side I don't think we'll have enough (to make a sound decision) on the east side," Arndt said.

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Doug Murphy/AFN
Melanie Pai wanted Village Planning Committee members to consider Monday the health impact of the Loop 202 on Ahwatukee Foothills children.



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